

South Carolina Course Alignment Project: Paired Courses Model

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Educational Policy Improvement Center

- A non-profit educational research center specializing in:
 - Developing and validating standards for career and college readiness
 - Helping teachers improve the cognitive skills and strategies needed for student college and career success
 - Developing measurements to assess progress
 - Determining alignment of syllabi and courses, assessments, and state and national standards to college readiness standards

Key EPIC Partners

- College Board
- International Baccalaureate
- Jobs for the Future
- Achieve, Inc.
- Dana Center, University of Texas, Austin
- **South Carolina Commission on Higher Education**
- Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board
- Maine Department of Education
- Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education
- Stanford School Redesign Network
- Foundation for California Community Colleges Early College High School Network
- Urban Assembly Schools
- Cristo Rey Network
- Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO)
- Western States Benchmark Consortium
- Gates Foundation
- Carnegie Corporation

Key Assumptions



- Essentially all students need to be capable of learning beyond high school in one or more formal learning setting
- The social and economic future of the next generation is dependent on the ability of US schools to prepare many more students for college and careers
- The high school diploma is not designed to make students college and career ready
 - The current high school model is about college *eligibility* for some, not college and career *readiness* for all
- Performances on state exams are not sufficient measures of college and career readiness

Key Assumptions



- Educational instruction and assessment have assumed that “aptitude” is one’s inherent ability to learn and has only one dimension
- Evidence now suggests that aptitude is multi-dimensional and highly malleable
- This means an education can and should develop students’ cognitive capabilities
- Research suggests these cognitive capabilities, or strategies, are as important as mastery of specific content knowledge and factual information
- Students develop these cognitive strategies when they are regularly presented challenging and engaging curriculum, instruction, and assessment

Key Assumptions



- College readiness and career readiness are similar but not the same
 - The definition of “ready” is a student who can *succeed—without remediation—in credit-bearing general education courses or a two-year certificate program*
 - “Succeed” is defined as *being able to progress in the chosen program*
- High schools therefore do not need to sort students based on potential post-high school futures
- The best curriculum for all students is one that contains challenging content that leads to the development of key cognitive strategies

Four Key Dimensions of College Readiness

Key Cognitive Strategies

Problem formulation, research, interpretation, communication, precision and accuracy

Key Content Knowledge

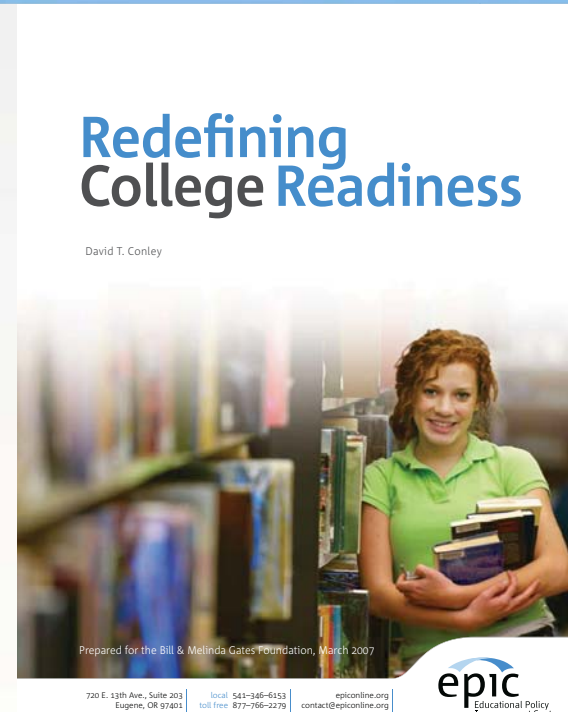
Key foundational content and “big ideas” from core subjects

Academic Behaviors

Self-management skills: time management, study skills, goal setting, self-awareness, persistence

Contextual Skills and Awareness

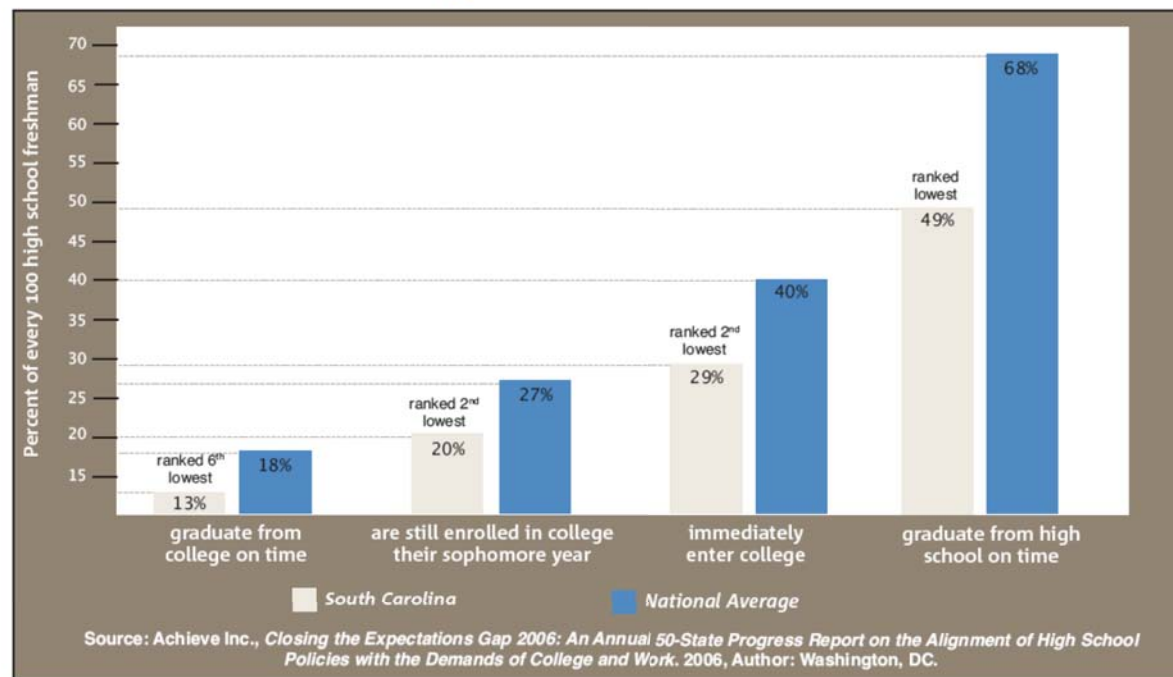
Admissions requirements, college types and missions, affording college, college culture, relations with professors



Download at: www.epiconline.org



Education Pipeline Comparing SC with National Averages



Remediation and Retention in SC



Baccalaureate degree completion rates for South Carolina students within EIGHT years:

- 58% for students who place into all credit-bearing courses upon entry (no remediation courses required)
- 17% for those who place into at least one remediation course

Alliance for Excellent Education, *Paying Double: Inadequate High Schools and Community College Remediation*. 2006. Author: Washington, DC.

SC Education and Economic Development Act (EEDA) and Higher Education

According to the Education and Economic Development Act, Higher Education is required to:

- Study the content and rigor of high school courses in order to provide a seamless pathway to postsecondary education.
- Address articulation agreements between school districts and public institutions of higher education in South Carolina to provide seamless pathways for adequately prepared students to move from high school directly into institutions of higher education.
- Make recommendations regarding coursework that is acceptable statewide for dual enrollment to be accepted in transfer within a related course of study.

Aligning secondary and postsecondary courses will:



- Provide explicit information on the content and skills necessary for postsecondary success in order to improve student preparation for college coursework
- Create clear pathways between high school and college coursework and reduce curriculum redundancy between high school and college
- Improve high school graduation rates, reduce the need for remedial instruction in college, and improve college retention and graduation rates
- Increase scholarship retention rates. [For example, from Fall 2006 – 2007, only 47.4% of freshmen Life Scholarship recipients retained the scholarship as sophomores.]
- Define more clearly and show in exemplar documents what we expect high school and college work to look like and enable entry-level college courses to be pitched to the appropriate cognitive challenge level – neither too high nor too low.



South Carolina Course Alignment Project: Achieving the Project Goals, 2008

- ✓ Conduct an environmental scan examining K-16 alignment issues in South Carolina and present findings to stakeholders
- ✓ Undertake a public outreach process to support the project
- ✓ Create a project steering committee
- ✓ Develop an interactive website to manage project information (http://www.epiconline.org/south_carolina)
- ✓ Identify college readiness standards to use in South Carolina, consistent with high school state academic standards
- ✓ Conduct a discrepancy analysis of exit-level high school courses and entry-level college courses in English, mathematics, and science
- ✓ Identify exemplar course components in existing high school courses
- ✓ Identify areas where potential paired courses (high school exit-level courses paired with entry-level college courses) could be developed



South Carolina Course Alignment Project: Achieving the Project Goals, 2008-2009

- ✓ Adoption of South Carolina College Readiness Reference Standards
- ✓ Conduct alignment study of current courses to Standards
- ✓ Nominate, select and assemble Statewide Course Design Team Members
- ✓ Provide consultants to the teams
 - ✓ U.S. Dept of Education grant participants
 - ✓ Role of these consultants
- ✓ Provide results from the alignment study to Statewide Course Design Team Members in a 2-day working kick-off meeting
- ✓ Develop paired courses and course artifacts



South Carolina Course Alignment Project: Achieving the Project Goals, 2009-2010

- ✓ Recruit Pilot Implementers via nomination process
- ✓ Prepare Course Packets-280 documents in 17 courses
- ✓ Train Pilot Implementers in two half-day trainings
- ✓ Modify online data collection instrument for use by Pilot Implementers
- ✓ Pilot implementation of example course pairs in South Carolina classrooms
- ✓ Revise courses and prepare for statewide distribution
- Recruit and train 150 additional Implementers in regional workshops
- Statewide implementation in 180 classrooms

Mathematics: A Special Case



- Policy recommendation from Faculty Course Design Team: **All SC high schools should expect all students to take four years of high school mathematics**
- Targeted Math Tech 4 and College Algebra for a Paired Course Design
- Prior to revisions of Math Tech 4 curriculum – Students had four years of math yet consistently placed into remedial college math – No Algebra II content
- Paired course replaced Math Tech 4 curriculum with Algebra II content
- DOE provided a curriculum waiver
- Improved secondary to postsecondary transitions



Implementation of Paired Courses Model

- Aligned course documents
- Shared assignments
- Scaffolded lessons
- Regular email and phone correspondence
- Joint faculty meetings
- Visits to each others' classrooms

Findings from Pilot Implementer Feedback: Changes Made

- *As a result of this project, there have been fewer wasted days and down time in my course. My students have done more research, more multi-drafting, more reading and been tested on more college level materials than in my previous four semesters of teaching this course---* High school faculty
- *I think the dialogue across institutional lines is a valuable product of this project. I also think the larger conversations among teachers at our two institutions that grew out of our “cluster” relationship may pay longer term dividends for the articulation of high school and college writing in our area.* College faculty

Findings from Pilot Implementer Feedback: Most Beneficial Part of Participation

- *I raised the level of expectations for my students and myself. I taught a topic I had avoided before (fluids). I encouraged more writing and hands-on problem solving.* High school faculty
- *My students benefited from my heightened awareness of the difficulties the high school instructors/students face. Where high school provides low achieving students a “safety net” to prevent failing—retesting, no grades lower than 60, etc I have made adjustments so that weaker writers don’t feel defeated by a low grade on the first couple of major assignments. I emphasize that learning to write well is a process of building skills. I now require an individual conference with each student to identify weaknesses.* College faculty

Findings from Pilot Implementer Feedback: Pilot Implementer Recommendations

- *Set and maintain high expectations. Make them seem virtually unattainable; most students will never do better or worse than you think they will. High school faculty*
- *Start a conversation with anyone in your area who teaches a course that is paired with your own. Exchange syllabi. High school teachers could easily contact college faculty and ask for a syllabus- I think most would be happy to share. College faculty*

South Carolina Course Alignment Project: Recap



- Legislative goal
- Visionary leadership at the SC Commission on Higher Education
- National experts on college and career readiness
- Key partners (SC Dept of Education and SC Technical College System)
- Nomination and selection of faculty experts within South Carolina
- Use of state funds to pay the South Carolina faculty consultants
- Close watch on preliminary outcomes, prepared to modify methods



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